XIV

Sex, Birth, Circumcision: Some Notes from South-West Arabia

The content of this brief study is but »gleanings«; it does not even take account of all written already on this extensive subject. An investigation of the wide diversity of custom in different districts is necessary. Topics on some of which I expect to publish separate papers, have been deliberately omitted such as *tawrīd* the provision of a woman for the guest, *irtibāṭ* compensation for adultery, the temporary lover, gypsy prostitutes, bastard (*farḵẖ* or in Wāḥidī country, *laflūf* (pl. *lafālīf*), and venereal diseases which appeared in the Yemen for the second time in 906 H. (1500 A. D.).

Sex

Tribespeople are not very prone to discussing matters of sex, but in the Wādī Ḥaḍramawt one forms the impression that both sexes, and all classes, particularly the leisured and well to do, are intensely interested in it. Many South Arabians would opine, no doubt, that this interest is at least no greater than in the west; it is true too, that distractions in Ḥaḍramawt are mainly limited to conversation and sex, though hagiologies often speak of men who consistently performed the morning prayer with the ablution of the previous night, and there are injunctions to have as little to do with one's womenfolk as possible. The well-known erotic work R u j ū ' a l - S ẖ a i ḵ ẖ is said to be in the hands of young men of the leisured classes of the Ḥaḍrami towns, and I have reported an erotic »*Ḵẖuṭbah*« from Tarīm.

Arabic medical literature is full of specifics for aphrodisiacs[1]; these are also sought by Ḥaḍramīs, and when in 1947, I first took these notes, the more sophisticated young men were already purchasing European preparations, an Italian product being shown me on one occasion with a quizzical enquiry as to what it was. In the leisured classes some, through over-indulgence, may find their sexual powers diminishing early. A young Saiyid in the western part of Ḥaḍramawt confided in me that, on marrying, he maintained intercourse three times a day for the first year, at night, early morning, and after mid-day. This had diminished to once per day some six years later when I met him, he had divorced his first wife and was now taking aphrodisiacs. Because of his standing as a Saiyid a Bedouin had come to him for advice on a young girl whom he had recently married but with whom he was mal-adjusted sexually (*ya'ḏẖī-hā*).

[1] An aphrodisiac is *muqwī*, and sexual power is *quwwah*.

In certain leisured circles in Tarīm, especially those in contact with the outside world of Indonesia or Malaya contraception was felt desirable but distasteful (1947), but since then European practice has undoubtedly become more widely known. A view was also expressed that *qaṭ' al-nasl* was forbidden by moralists[2]. A Tarīmī said he believed women practiced contraception, and used abortifacients, but they tell men nothing of this and it is kept secret among them, though they might quite freely discuss it with other women. The high infant mortality is an effectual check on population growth in the lower classes, but not so in the upper classes where it is a matter of concern. A reduction of the high infant mortality would be dangerous to the narrow economy of Ḥaḍramawt, yet the public health measures of the protecting power tend to diminish it. However a contrary factor is the vast exodus of adult males has produced a scarcity of labour, so one often sees in the fields half a dozen women working alongside one old man.

So many men being abroad, it is said that Lesbianism (*mufāqaḥah*) is common, a female lover being called *ṣāḥibah*. The emigration of young males is not new problem to Ḥaḍramawt; it was said a Ḥaḍramī would go off to Indonesia, leaving his young bride in his father's house, without returning for many years, yet not divorcing her. These cases (30 years separation has been mentioned), are perhaps exceptional and repugnant to some Ḥaḍramīs themselves. In the *fiqh*-books there is a formula for automatic divorce of a wife when her husband goes missing abroad. Ṣhaikh Muḥ. b. Sālim al-Kidādī al-Baiḥānī[3] attacks Lesbianism (*musāḥaqah*) in Aden amongst girls and unmarried women, in many houses, as making marriageable girls unfit for marriage, and if they do marry, unfit for pregnancy and childbearing.

Homosexuality[4] is said to be common, but it must, I think, be specially incident among soldiers stationed in the many forts of the country where local women are generally kept strictly apart from the soldiery, but if this is so one should qualify these cases as rather heterosexual. Thesiger denies the existence of homosexuality among the Bedouin, also by nature of their occupation away from their wives for long periods, and I think he is right. I surmise too that it is not very common among the labouring classes.

[2] J. David-Weill. Le Djâmi' d' Ibn Wahb, (Le Caire, 1939), I, p. 133, quotes Traditions against contraception and drinks for inducing it.
The question of contraception seems to be avoided by al-Baiḥānī (infra).

[3] Ustādh al-Mar'ah, (Aden, 1950), p. 98. The author is a prominent *'ālim* of Aden, said to be at rivalry with the other well known *'ālim*, Bā Ḥamīsh. Muslim women in Aden are reported to have reacted to this book with such remarks as, "What has that old blind man go to do with telling us how to behave?" Al-Baiḥānī is blind, but a good scholar and an able man, not really at all ultra-conservative.

[4] The technical vocabulary is *mukhannith*, with *makhnūth* catamite, and *lūṭī* is also used.
The vulgar vocabulary of Ḥaḍramawt has an expressive range of indecent sexual opprobrium of which I have recorded the following:
Ṣuḥbat-ak ṣubḥat al-ka'āl, Your company is like that of the testes. i. e. it is of no use.
Faṣ'ah lak, A penis to you. *Faṣ'ah lummak*, A penis to your mother.
Labūk saba' kanāfir, Seven *kumfarahs* to your father. (The *kumfarah* is the head of the penis where *the circumcision takes place.)*
Lummak al-kanāfir fī ḥubbi-hā, May your mother have *kumfarahs* in her sexual organ.
Ṣharjah fī ka'ab zār ummak, An itching in the urethra of your mother. The *zār*, properly a palm, is said also to be the *zambūr* or clitoris.

Pudor

All Arabs are most careful not to expose the privy parts to their fellows; this is just as true among the tribes-who do not cover as much as from the navel to the knee, as it is amongst the Ḥaḍramīs who do. If a man is accidentally exposing the parts below his *miʿwaz* (kilt) one might say in Ḥaḍramawt, »*Ustur al-bunduq*, cover the gun,« or »*Sẖuf al-rajul sẖārif*, Look the man is exposed«[5].

A mass of regulations governs the modesty of a Muslim woman; they can be read in al-Baiḥānī's book of precepts. Nevertheless a Muslim woman of high degree, a *sharīfah* will not bother to veil before a slave, he being too menial for there to be any possibility of misconduct. In 1947—49 hardly any woman would so outrage her modesty as to allow my wife to examine her privy parts at her clinics in Tarīm or al-Mukallā, though possibly things are altered now. In the following passage taken from al-Baiḥānī's book[6] the worthy *sẖaikẖ* is taking a broad-minded moderate view for a South Arabian *ʿālim* of this question, yet it seems absurdly pompous to a European physician.

»If, my lady, you are a doctor or a nurse in a hospital it is permitted you to look at the places to be treated and what must be looked at in a sick person. If you yourself should be the sick person, do not let a doctor enter your presence unless you have your husband or one of the persons within the prohibited degrees (*al-maḥārim*) by you, and do not display any of your pure body to him except the places of the disease and those where it is necessary to place the medicament. There is no harm in your taking an injection or giving it, in any part of the body whatsoever, even with childbirth (*tawlīd*) if necessity requires. The doctor may look at your place where the child is delivered, if there is no trained woman doctor there.«

Conservative as the Arab Muslims of Aden are a change is taking place in regard to woman. Their veils nowadays are almost transparent — which they certainly were not in 1940, and a group of young women recently made the attempt to appear in public unveiled, though this demonstration was greeted by some hostility, and not approved of by al-Baiḥānī and Bā Ḥamīsẖ.

A Love-Charm

When enquiring about the term *al-tiwal*, a love-charm, cited by Ibn Wahb[7] I was told the Ḥaḍramī equivalent is *al-ṣarf*[8] which is something written out. A woman obtains a *ṣarf* and places it under the threshold, or in bed, or in water which the man she wishes to incline to her will drink. As this object can be got rid of if its exact location be known, the *ṣarf* may be put in a bottle and thrown into the sea, so that nobody knows exactly where it is. Many Ḥaḍramīs come back from East Africa (1954) and seem mad and bewitched until they return there. The African name for this spell »*Ūgāngah*«[9] is quite well known in Ḥaḍramawt. After their return to East Africa these men become quite normal again.

[5] Syn. of *sẖārif is makssẖūf*. Cf. C. de Landberg, Études . . . Daṯînah, (Leiden, 1905–13), II, p. 942, *itmakẖkẖaṭ*, mouche-toi le nez, used in this sense. *Bunduq*, syn. *qaḍīb*.

[6] Op. cit., p. 28.

[7] Op. cit., p. 111.

[8] Because thereby you „*tiṣrif al-maḥabbah*, Turn love."

[9] The Swahili word meaning "medicine charm."

Conception and Pregnancy[10]

The ideas current in Ḥaḍramawt explained in this paragraph may not be held elsewhere, and even these were mostly collected in Tarīm. It is popular belief that nine tenths of desire is with women, and only one tenth with men, but that women are only restrained by their modesty. Inside the female genitalia it is thought that there is at the top of the vagina, a single hair, known as *al-ṣ̲ha'rah al-yatīmah*, and this is in fact mentioned in the erotic *maqāmah* or rather mock *K̲ẖuṭbah* from Tarīm copied from al-Nafzāwī[11]. It is held that both men and women have *nuṭfah* or semen. In the case of a fat woman it is believed that her being fat prevents the semen from entering the uterus. When women do not become pregnant, intercourse is carried on with the woman's hips on a cushion, so as to allow, they believe, the semen to flow downwards, the women then being as the Ḥaḍramīs say, *mankūsah*[12].

Fertility customs, the majority associated with the tombs of saints are countless and varied, and nowhere more so than in Aden. In a collection of essays, Muḥammad 'Alī Luqmān[13] remarks that, »In many milieux in Aden, women and men, believe that the 'Aidarūs Saiyid[14] has a cat descended from the Jinn (*aṣlu-hā min al-Jinn*), for which animal they leave eggs, sweet-meats and parched grain (*qalīyah*[15]), and they repair to the grave of the saint and from it they take out earth which they eat to cure barrenness (*'aqm*)[16].« Another Adenese told me that women come on a Sunday to put down *qalīyah*, almonds, and eggs for the famous cats of the 'Aidarūs mosque-these, he said, are *nuṣ̲hūḥ*[17], that you throw down to keep away the Jinn. Some say there is actually a S̲haiṭān in the 'Aidarūs cats. If a pregnant woman evinces strong desire for sexual intercourse her child will be a girl, but if on the contrary she shows distaste and repugnance to it, then her child will be a boy. Another pointer to the sex of the child is that if the woman is pained by the withdrawal of the *ḏ̲hakar*, then the child will be a boy, but if there be no pain then it is likely to be a girl. If the child faces outwards it will be a boy, if inwards, it will be a girl. Again if the man should ejaculate first the child will resemble him, and vice-versa, if the woman does then the child will take after her. Some women know the actual night upon which conception takes place. These are current ideas in the Wādī Ḥaḍramawt.

[10] Doreen Ingrams, Survey of Social and Economic Conditions in the Aden Protectorate (Asmara, 1949), pp. 98–100, deals with birth and childhood. While the bulk seems drawn from Landberg, there are some interesting details based on her personal experience.

[11] Al-Ṯḍāḥ fī 'Ilm al-Nikāḥ (Tunis, n. d.) Cf. Brockelmann, Gal, II, p. 257, Sup., II, p. 369, & Prose and Poetry from Ḥaḍramawt (London, 1951), p. 53.

[12] Cf. my Hūd and other Pre-Islamic Prophets of Ḥaḍramawt, Le Muséon (Louvain, 1954), LXVII, p. 164, et passim.

[13] 'Adan taṭlub al-Ḥukm al-D̲ẖātī (Aden, n. d., circa 1951), p. 41.

[14] The famous saint of Aden, and its only Manṣab.

[15] Star-Calendars and an Almanac from South-West Arabia, Anthropos (Posieux, 1954), XLIX, p. 457, *qawālī* means toasted foods such as locusts and maize-cobs.

[16] Dust is commonly taken out of the *ṭāqah* or little hole into the grave for numerous purposes, but always with the idea of *barakah*.

[17] *Nuṣ̲hūḥ* according to Lane, Lexicon, means a drink a little less than to satisfy.

The condition of *raz*ʿ[18] has been described to me by Adenese, mentioned, en passant, by al-Baiḥānī[19] as *ʿamalīyat al-razʿ*. He condemns it in the same breath as the *zār*[20] which its ritual seems to resemble. Colonel Jacob[21] states that the rite is usually performed by a woman who calls for a black sheep and a piece of iron, or asafoetida. She slaughters the animal and consecrates it to her Jinn, saying. »This is thy supper. Possess such an one, and let him no more rise from his bed.« The woman can likewise order her Jinn to release the victim. Apparently, too, Jacob knew a man who was a *razzāʿ* who used to call on Allāh to lay this spell on a person!

My sophisticated Aden informant rendered *razʿ* by the word Voodoo. A woman might say, *»Yishtū yarzaʿū-nī*, They wish to constrict the foetus inside me« (so that she will be unable to deliver it). A woman under this spell is called *marzūʿah*. I recall that on our first arrival in Ḥaḍramawt, it was suggested to my wife that she might examine a woman in Dawʿan supposed to have been pregnant for five years, though no word was said to us of magic. A man can be affected in like fashion so that *»Yikẖallūn-uh bi-lā ḥaqq al-raggāl*, They leave him without any of the thing a man has.« i. e. without sexual powers. The *fakk al-razʿ*, or release, can be accomplished by all sorts of people, but not seemingly by special families. People even go to Bin ʿAlwān at Yifrus, and to al-Sẖarq for the purpose of freeing themselves from this sad condition.

In 1941 a Baiḍānī remarked to me that when a woman is actually in labour, and has difficulty in delivering her baby and arrives a point when she seems entirely unable to do so, her husband comes in and throws down some piece of his own clothing beside her, and it must be his own, after which she delivers the child. Unfortunately I have no further details as to what is said on this occasion.

Disposal of the Placenta

On visiting with our friend, Saiyid ʿAlī b. ʿAqīl, his house in Masīlat Āl al-Sẖaikẖ the evening after his child had been born in 1947, he gave an exclamation of impatience as he crossed the threshold, finding the earth at the door had been disturbed. His explanation of the circumstance started my inquiries into a practice of which he disapproved, considering it merest superstition. His mother, I later heard, was, somewhat to his discomfort, known as a practitioner, amongst women of course, of folk medicine, including, I should think, remedies involving spitting, for the spittle of holy personages, Saiyids and Sẖaikẖs, enters into many curative practices.

The placenta of a woman who has given birth is buried at the main door of the house, often there is only one door, about two feet below the surface. The plac-

[18] My informant gave me the following senses of *razaʿ*, "to dash to the ground", as one says, *"ṣẖallait-uh wa-razzaʿt-uh*, I took him and threw him on the ground." However this seems to me inappropriate here and the senses of tasser, empiler, serrer, given in the Gloss. Dat., obviously come closer to the root of the meaning.

[19] Ustādẖal-Marʿah, op. cit., p. 241.

[20] The *zār* is well known in both Aden and al-Mukallā. I have collected a series of notes on it from both places. It is forbidden in Aden but no doubt goes on secretly.

[21] H. F. Jacob, Perfumes of Araby, (London, 1915), p. 168–9, describing also other types of razʿ.

enta, known as *lummāt*, is first placed in ashes (*ramād*)[22] and an iron nail, a *wada-'ah* or cowrie-shell, and a little cotton placed on top of the *lummāt*. A *miskīn* woman in 'Aidīd said however, that you place the *lummāt* in a *quffah* or round basket, and put ashes on it so as not to let the cat eat it, and she added that only cotton (*'uṭb*) and a nail (*mismār*) were buried with it. A passing injunction of al-Baiḥānī[23], »The bone (*'aẓm*), the cowrie, and the bead (*ḵharazah*)[24] do not avert the evil eye, nor repel the snare of Satan,« may give an indication why a cowrie should be used. It seems to be objectionable that anything untoward should befall the *lummāt*, for of an excited or hasty man, you say, »*kalat lummāt-ak al-ḥirr*, the cat has eaten your afterbirth.«[25]

If the child is a boy the *lummāt* are buried outside, about the door-step, but should it be a girl, inside the *mardam* or wooden base sill of the door-frame in the *ḍaiqah* or entrance passage from the door into the house — this passage generally has a simple earth floor. As the *lummāt* are buried, the phrase *Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm* is uttered, and many stones are placed over it. A man buries the *lummāt*, the father, brother, or a servant. A second *lummāt* would be buried beside the first lot. The reason for burying the *lummāt* of a boy and girl in different places is because it is desired that the girl should remain at home, and not »*til'ab*, play«, i. e. commit *zināwah* (adultery), while you want the boy on the other hand to go out and earn his living (*yisraḥ ya'īš*)[26]. For Ḥaḍramawt this has a great significance, since emigration on a large scale has taken place for centuries but especially in the last century, and of course today. When I questioned a member of a Saiyid family why Ḥaḍramī women never left Ḥaḍramawt, he simply stated that to do so would be *'aib*, i. e. shame, though of course of more recent years this has altered a little. I surmise that the lack of privacy on dhows, especially in regard to sanitation, may have something to do with this, whereas air travel is a different matter.

[22] Al-Baiḥānī' loc. cit., inveighs against "lines of blood (*ḵhuṭūṭ al-dam*) and ashes on the walls and ways", and although he does not explain these superstitions it is plain from the context that they are precautions against the Jinn, so perhaps that is intended also in Ḥaḍramawt. One sees ashes in the lanes of Tarīm where the "long drop" of the privy opens onto the path, and I infer this is for the same reason.

[23] Op. cit., p. 243.

[24] He means beads worn by children, generally as far I can recollect of red coral or amber, but I have not made special investigations into this. There is a yellow amber bead which comes from abroad used by children in Ḥaḍramawt, called *kahrab miskī*, and known as *al-ṣaddāq*, and is supposed to avert envy (*yidfa' al-ḥasad*). Light burns it (*taḥruq-uh al ḍaw'*). It is opposed to another kind of amber, *kahrab ḥajarī*, called *al-kaḍḥḍḥāb*. *Kahrab miskī* has a smell when you rub it but the other has not. Muḥammad 'Alī Luqmān, op. cit., p. 41 however speaks of the *ḵharazat al-Ḥakamī*, the latter a family of the lower Yemen, which is used to cure tuberculous glands.

[25] Compare the Aden saying, "*Yākul laḥm daggāg*, He eats chicken flesh." i. e. he is hot-tempered.

[26] Dr Mustafa Kariem has written me the following note from the Sudan. "In the Sudan they dispose of the afterbirth (*ḵhalāṣ*) by giving it to a person, man or woman, who is merry, and laughs often, to bury it inside the house. Children are brought to see it and they are supposed to laugh during the operation of its burial, so that the child grows up to be a merry person. With it is buried a piece of sugar, a date, and a sweet. The umbilical cord (*al-ḥabl al-surrī*) is kept in a box (*ḥuqq*) after being dried and a piece of dry perfume ('*iṭr*) is kept with it." Cf. J. S. Trimingham, Islam in the Sudan (Oxford, 1949), p. 142, & Abdulla el Tayib, The Changing Customs of the Riverain Sudan, Sudan Notes and Records (Khartoum, 1955), XXXVI, p. 6. W. S. Blackman, The Fellāḥīn of Upper Egypt, (London, 1927), p. 63–4 says, "The placenta is buried under the threshold of a house. It may be buried under the floor of a house to appease the *uḵht* (sister) and *qarīnah* if children have died. But otherwise it is thrown into the Nile or into a canal by a woman. She must smile as she does so – so that the child will have a happy disposition."

The umbilical cord (*surr*) is preserved, being dried and stored in a bottle (*yaḍumm-uh fī ghaṛṣ̲ah*). When the child has colic (*maghṣ̲ah*)[27], the umbilicus is steeped in water, and the water given the child to drink to stop the pain. After steeping it in milk they apply it to children's eyes (*yukaḥḥilūn bah al-'uyūn*), a similar usage being remarked upon by the mediaeval author al-Ṣ̲harjī[28]. One often says to accompany the action, »*Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm, mā ṣ̲hā' Allāh, lā quwwah illā bi-'llāh.*« Or with such cures one may repeat normal Islamic formulae like, »*Bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm, nuṣallī 'alā saiyid-nā Muḥammed, ṭibb al-qulūb wa-adwā'-hā wa-nūr al-abṣār wa-aḍyā'-hā, wa-'āl-uh, wa-ṣaḥb-ih, wa-sallam,* »In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, we bless our Lord Muḥammad, elixir of hearts and their medicine, light of the eyes and their brightness, and his Family and Companions.« In general if one feels unwell or weak, one says, »*Yā Saiyidī, yā Ḥabībī, yā Rasūl Allāh, qillat ḥīlatī, adrik lanā bi-'l-shifā' wa-'l-'āfiyah,* »O my Lord, o my Ḥabīb[29], o Apostle of God, my strength is little, hasten to aid me with healing and heath.« The *miskīn* woman in 'Aidīd did not seem to know of any particular formulae used in conjunction with these practices.

Ceremonies following the Birth

When the child is born the women immediately go to the top of the house and utter the usual trills of joy so that one knows where a birth has taken place in the Quarter. The newly delivered woman is cleaned, and a good dress put on, and when the women in other houses have time to deck themselves out, they start arriving to visit the mother. In the case of our carpenter in Tarīm, a *miskīn*, about 200 women came to pay their respects to his wife on such an occasion, coming to kiss her head (lit. sniff *ṣ̲hamm*), and to kiss or, properly, to sniff, the baby. The *ṣ̲hammah 'alā kawr* as the ceremony is called, lasts seven days, and our carpenter looked somewhat rueful at the heavy expense of the birth, for all these women would have to be given some refreshment. The woman purefies herself (*taṭahhar*) after a period of 40 days, known as *'awfah*, but al-Baiḥānī says [30] that the *nifās*, or state of impurity consequent on child-birth, is from 40 to 60 days.

After the woman has borne the child you let eggs fall from the hand and break in the *ḍaiqah* (Syn. *dihlīz*), some in the place where the birth has taken place, some in the house in general, adding perhaps the phrase *Bismillāh*, In the name of God. Another woman said, *wāḥid fi 'l-ḍaiqah*, one in the passage, another in the *muqaddimah*, i. e. the place in front of the room, and another in the room itself (*manzil*). This is so that the Jinn will eat them, and not bring harm to the child or the woman. One woman said she did not know why eggs were broken, but it was just to keep

[27] Also a class. Arabic word.

[28] Ṭ a b a q ā t a l - K h a w ā ṣ ṣ , (Cairo, 1903), p. 147.

[29] Title of Muḥammad and of the Saiyids.

[30] Op. cit., p. 117. In Aden sacrifices are made before a woman returns to normal life. C. de Landberg, E t u d e s . . . Daṭînah (Leiden, 1905–13), III, p. 1777 describes the *dḥabīḥat al-nafās*, sacrifice de l' accouchement, which is called the *fadū* (lit. ransom), which he identifies with the *'aqīqah*. The child's head is rubbed with the blood of the animal, and then the *taḥnīk* is carried out, which in Daṭḥînah is rubbing the child's mouth with a holy man's saliva. (p. 1712), or he may rub it with oil, against Iblīs.

any harm away; an egg, she said, is placed by the child's head *(kawr)*, and after some days it is broken. I heard a mission nurse allude to this practice in the Shaikh 'Uthmān hospital — which she tried to stop — it seems they would be dropped by the door of the hospital by a relative before the child is born.

The Ṣukhmah

At one house in Tarīm we saw a newly-born child with aloes (*ṣabir*) on its umbilicus, while on its brow was traced in the same substance, »*Mā shā' Allāh*, What God wills.« This phrase as is well known, is used to avert the evil eye from some desirable object. Sometimes the child simply has a black spot daubed on the middle of its brow, but we also saw this black mark on the face of a little boy at Qasam, and over his nostrils, against the evil eye — it was roughly sketched. Many have it marked on the bridge of the nose. Baby boys and girls sometimes have a letter *wāw* in reverse drawn on their brow to guard them against the evil eye (*sawwū wāw maqlūb yaḥrusu-hum min al-ḥasad*). I can recall that in one case I saw a number on the brow, and was told that it was merely to keep count of how many days had elapsed since the birth, but this may have been an attempt to turn a superstitious custom into an innocuous Islamic one. On some occasions I was told, a child in arms is marked in this way but not one newly born. By way of comparison Professor Taiyib[31] reports that in the Sudan a cross is made with antimony on a child's forehead, and he thinks this may have a Christian origin, but in view of its existence in Arabia also I am inclined to think it is a custom older than either religion, possibly with something of the idea of »blackening the face«, but I have no evidence for such a supposition. This cross or other mark is called *ṣukhmah*, and elsewhere in Ḥaḍramawt it is sometimes called *samād*[32], as to take a case in point, in Ḥuraiḍah. In Egypt it is known as *daqq*. Drawn on a woman's brow after delivering a child, it is also against the evil eye (*ḍidd al-'ain*, or *tiqṣir al-'ain*); this however is only done in the case of a primapara, and mothers giving birth for the third and more times, do not have this done to them. Another form of *ṣukhmah* on women is a cross on the brow, yet another is a line across the eyebrows, down the nose, and under the chin. I saw a mother with simply a line across her brows and down the nose.

That this is a very ancient custom is shown by the Tradition reported in the *Jāmi'* of Ibn Wahb[33], and I believe there only and not in the canonical collections, to which of course it is anterior. Here it is stated that a woman brought a small child, a boy (*ṣabī*) to 'Ā'ishah to ask for *tabarruk*, usually rendered as »blessing« for him. The text runs, *Qad khaṭṭat baina 'ainai-hi aw fī jabhati-hi khaṭṭ aswad*, She had drawn between his eyes or on his brow, a black line.« 'Ā'ishah, we are

[31] Abdulla El Tayib, The Changing Customs of the Riverain Sudan, Sudan Notes and Records (Khartoum, 1955), XXXVI, p. 7.
Naturally there are many parallels in South Arabia to the Sudanese customs. For instance in al-Mukallā also a string is worn round a child's waist, though I have no information as to why this is done.

[32] *Samād* is a word meaning "dung". It is not impossible that this is what it means in this context in Ḥuraiḍah. It leads one to speculate that the *ṣukhmah* could originally have been of dung, but there is no evidence for this.

[33] J. David-Weill, Le Djâmi' d'Ibn Wahb, p. 112.

told, refused to bless the child until this mark had been removed. The Tradition is cast in a familiar pattern, but at least it expresses the disapproval of early Islām of a custom which has survived in Arabia up to our own time. The same volume[34] informs us that when ʿĀʾiṯah saw a child with two anklets (*ḵẖalḵẖāl*) on its feet, she indicated that she preferred silver anklets, which leads us to conclude that these anklets were of iron for some superstitious reason, repugnant also to the early Muslims. One may still see children in Ḥaḍramawt with similar iron anklets or bracelets, but I have recorded no precise instance in my field-notes, though a *miskīn* who used to come to our house in Tarīm wore iron toe-rings round his big toes, against, as he said, accidents or pain in the feet; these rings were obviously not for practical purposes but on account of some superstition.

Naming the Child

Saiyid ʿAlī b. ʿAqīl said that in olden days the grandfather would chose a child's name in the case of a boy at least, but he personally was submitting three names on three separate pieces of paper for his wife to chose; this is done because women are mostly illiterate, though she is not. However what is generally done is that, when a boy or a girl is born, the son asks his father and mother what it is to be called, and also his wife. Should there be disagreement, as probably nearly always happens, then the three names are written separately on three bits of paper and placed in a basket which is brought to the mother. After reciting the *Fātiḥah* she puts in her hand and draws out the first slip she touches, and thus the name is decided. I was told that anyone may draw the slip from the basket, and some people prefer that a boy below age of puberty should do so.

In al-Mukallā if the father of a child happens to be absent at the birth of his child, his near relations will propose various names; the mother usually has a name to suggest, and the other relations might comprise the child's grandfather, his great-grandfathers, or the father's brother. The choice is made by lot (*raw*ʿ, pl. *arwā*ʿ); a stranger is asked to select the name from a number of slips of paper, placing the slip he choses on the child's brow. This may be done once, or, if they are not satisfied, three times, after which there is no further dissent.

Nothing illustrates the elaborate conventions regarding women in Southern Arabia better than the devious means employed by a woman to communicate the good news to her distant husband. An illiterate woman will write to her husband through the intermediary of an old man who is literate, and this man will mention in the letter that he and the neighbours greet you, but the letter will be written as if by the husband's son, even if the latter be still an infant, and it will have the form, »*Walad-ak ṭālib al-duʿā'*, Your son the seeker of blessing . . .« or if it be daughters only, »*Awlād-ak al-mamlūkīn ṭālibīn al-duʿā'*, Your children the possessed, seekers of blessing . . . « It will be noted that the Arabic of the last formula is in the masculine plural, though daughters are intended, a convention also that of poetry, to use the masculine when speaking of a girl. The prospective father will realise at once whether the expected birth has taken place for the letter will be addressed to him as »*Lā-yad al-wālid ʿAbduh Ḥasan*. To the hand of the

[34] Op. cit., p. 12–3.

father 'Abduh Ḥasan.«[35] Otherwise it will simply bear the superscription, »*Lā yad 'Abduh Ḥasan.*« In the case of a second boy being born to the father, the letter might be in the name of *Muḥammad wa-akhū-h*, Muḥammad and his brother. In the event of a boy there is of course no secrecy — one says for instance, »*Al-dīk yiṣīḥ min wasaṭ al-baiḍah*, The cock crows from inside the egg.« But, if a daughter be born to the absent husband, this will not be mentioned directly, though an allusion will be made to the birth, as for example, *'āj aswad*, black ivory; I suppose that the underlying concept is that through a girl child a man's honour may be blackened[36]. Another way to hint at the birth of a girl is to enclose a piece of a woman's dress in the letter; in the Yemen a bit of the yellow *wars* cosmetic, or of indigo (*nīl*), could be smeared on the corner of the letter. The Arab attitude to girl children is well known, but this does not of course mean that an Arab father is any less fond of his little daughter than any other race.

Names can vary according to the class of the family[37] though certain Islāmic names are common to all; the *miskīns* and *ḍa'īfs* have often very curious names such as Musaibilī[38] or Bulrush Millet, but Sa'īd and its variants is common among them; I have also a long list of names only given to slaves and slave-women. If the son of a *miskīn* is born on a Thursday he is called Khamīs (fem. Khamīsah), and a girl born on Friday may be called Jum'ah, while a boy born on a Wednesday it was said, may be called Rabī' or Rubaiya', though in parts of South Arabia this is counted an unlucky day. A child born in 'Arafah (Dhu 'l-Ḥijjah) is called 'Arfān in Ḥaḍramawt, Wāḥidi territory, and perhaps elsewhere; children are also named after the months Rajab, Sha'bān, Ramaḍān, and Rabī', but not after Ṣafar which is regarded as unlucky.

Precautions against Harmful Influences

In Ḥaḍramawt where conditions are such that it is common enough for only two children out of ten live births to survive, great fear of supernatural influences unfavourable to the survival of the child is entertained by the common people. In al-Mukallā, and later on in other places I saw a small boy dressed as a girl to avoid the evil eye, just as has been reported by E. J. W. Lane for Egypt; the little boy, perhaps a year or two old, wore a kind of bonnet (*kummah*).[39]

In Tarīm sometimes, when people have lost two or three children, instead of putting the newly-born baby, boy or girl, on a *ṭabaq* or tray for winnowing grain, they set it on a *khubrah*, i. e. a sort of open basket for covering the date-clusters till they ripen, and ask God to preserve the child, making various prayers inside their hearts but saying nothing. The child is then called Khubrah, the name being given

[35] It was remarked that one addresses a letter to *al-'amm al-wālid*, or *al-khāl al-wālid*, the paternal or maternal uncle, the begettor", on account of their close relationship to oneself.

[36] As one calls a female relation *'ārī*, lit., my disgrace, but perhaps it may simply be an allusion to the fact that Ḥaḍramī women usually wear black. In letters a woman is often spoken of as *"al-maḍlūl*, the person indicated."

[37] Cf., e. g. my Saiyids of Ḥaḍramawt, (London, 1951), p. 10.

[38] Jacob, op. cit., p. 161 mentions a child called "hedgehog" against the evil eye. Might this be the explanation of tribal names like Kalb, dog?

[39] The *kummah* is said to be worn in the cold season, it is ornamented with beads etc. I actually heard this word in Tarīm not in al-Mukallā.

to either a boy or a girl, until it is 8 years old, though of course it has a proper name of its own, but it is then called by its own name, for with marriage in the not so very distant future (about puberty) this would not be a suitable name. The name Khubrah or Khibrah is against envy (*ḥasad*), and if they call it so, then it will be safe (*In sammaw-h bi-Khibrah yislam).* I believe that in this custom is a trace of the worship of the palm, for the existence of which in Ḥaḍramawt, there are several indications.

Also in Tarīm, when your child is sickly and yet is always eating, and all other remedies that you have tried have failed, you may take him to the tomb of Sālim Bā Dann in the cemetery area (al-Turbah) of Tarīm, a saint described by a verse in *al-Mashraʿ al-Rawī*[40] as a Shāfiʿī, but stated by Raḥaiyam to have been one of the Mashāyikh before the time of the ancestor of the Saiyids, ʿĪsā al-Muhājir[41]. The parents place the child by the tomb, stand back a little, and either say aloud or think in their minds, some prayer such as, »*Baghainā wiḥdah min al-ʿawāfī*, We wish one of the healths.« Probably addressing the shaikh with the phrase, «*Bi-ḥaqq-ak*, By your right.« The sense is — either take him or leave him, and if after this the child cries, they know that he will live.

Falling within a similar category is the case of the *mushtarā* or »purchased« child, described to me by an Adenese. A woman who loses children, both boys and girls, year after year, goes to a saint (*walī*), and tells the Imām (*maimūn al-walī*), and buys the child from the saint, vowing (*tindhūr*), each year for the first seven years of the child's life, on each Muḥarram she will dress him in green silk (*ḥarīr akhḍar*), and that every night she will go from house to house disguised as a beggar-woman asking people for alms, with such phrases as »*Yallah, yā karīm.*« The proceeds of her begging will go to the saint. At the same time the child must wear an earring (*wazarah*) and a leather amulet (*ḥirz*) on a bangle of silver or iron. She takes the child with her when she goes out disguised as a beggar, and is accompanied by an old woman *mushtariḥah*, a singing woman, usually of negroid descent, perhaps a Sawākinīyah[42]. Perhaps it is for this reason that the *mushtarā* boy is rather girlish in his ways (*al-mushtarā dāʾim-an banātī).* The walī releases the boy after the seven years are over, but every year during the first seven days of Muḥarram they entertain their friends to some liquid refreshment.

It is not known what the woman pays to the saint. The most prominent *walī* in the Yemen is the celebrated Bin ʿAlwān, even although the Imām of the Yemen has destroyed his shrine; another place al-Sharg in the Yemen is also famous.

Circumcision (Khitān)

A short text on circumcision amongst the Qarā tribe has been published by Landberg[43] and a description with some wealth of detail is given by Thomas[44]

[40] Muḥ. b. Abī Bakr al-Shillī, (Cairo, 1319), I, p. 148. At the time of the Wahhābī incursions into Ḥaḍramawt early last century Bā Dann protected Tarīm by a miracle from them, so that they are reported to have said, „*Lī qad dhā dannu-hum aish ʿād maṣabbu-hum*, If that is their little drinking vessel (goblet) what will their ablution jug be like?" It is a somewhat rueful pun on his name; but I do not suppose there is any truth in the story.

[41] This would then make him an Islamic saint prior to the 4th century H.

[42] Probably an African woman.

[43] Ḥaḍramoût, (Leiden, 1901), p. 487 seq.

[44] Bertram Thomas, Arabia Felix (London, 1938), p. 71 seq.

also; more recently this same type of circumcision has been remarked among the Rāṣḥid by Thesiger[45]. This is a public ceremony with exposure of the member in public if I understand the two latter accounts correctly, though no positive statement is made to this effect. Thesiger also mentions for western Arabia, 'Asīr, the »flaying circumcision« where it seems certainly exposed; which may be compared with the analysis by Landberg[46] of several 19th century accounts of the same. In Islāmic Ḥaḍramawt of the towns and villages this would be regarded as gross indecency I am sure, and the ceremony there is quite different.

Al-Baiḥānī[47] states what must be the normal Shāfi'ī-procedure. »The first thing that is obligatory (to perform) for him according to law (*sḥar'*), is the circumcision, and a sacrificial animal (*'aqīqah*) is desirable, two sheep for a male, and one for a female, to be slaughtered on the 7th day, and their meat given away. The *aḍḥān* is performed at its right ear, and the prayer at its left ear; an upright man rubs its palate and choses it a good name. When its head is shaved it is desirable to give (*taṣaddaqa*) in charity the weight of its hair in gold or silver«.

According to Raḥaiyam circumcision used to take place in ancient times in Tarīm on the 7th day after parturition (*fi 'l-yawm al-sābi' ba'd al-waḍ'*), but it now takes place mostly after 7 to 8 years[48]. The Bedu however, he added, only circumcise when a man is about to marry; the operation is performed with the *jambīyah*, dagger, and is painful. Raḥaiyam believed that circumcision increases lust. Major Ian Snell[49] says of the Ḥumūm, »They still delay circumcision until the boy is about to carry a rifle (about 14 years old) and then they carry out the operation as a ceremony, if possible several boys at once, and there is a great party«. I am inclined to see in the Qarā-Rāṣḥid-Ḥumūm initiation ceremony, the older practice which has survived in Ḥaḍramawt.

In Tarīm the circumcision is performed by the Āl Bā Salmah, who are cuppers (*ḥajjāmīn*), and in Tāribah by the *mujabbir* (lit. bone-setter), the *ṭabīb* (doctor), one by the name of Muḥsin bin Ja'far bin al-Khamīs al-'Āmirī. The latter insists that the children come to him, but the Bā Salmah go to the house of the boy to be circumcised, always at a time when it is neither hot nor cold (*fī waqt ma'dūl*), and either on the Iṯnain (Monday) or Khamīs (Thursday). Bā Salmah comes secretly (*yijī Bā Salmah bi-ḵufyah*) in order not to terrify the child who is soothed and calmed always, so that the blood will not be made to gush forth when the operation actually takes place. This is practically the reverse of the drama enacted by the Qarā and others.

The penis is massaged gently so as to get the *ḥashafah* (glans) to come out, and is oiled with ghee (*saman*). The operator brings with him a circle of rubber (*qiṭṭaḥ madrūjah*), by which Raḥaiyim meant, I must suppose, a rubber band. The boy is gripped by two or three persons and the rubber is put round the penis to bring out a piece of skin that can be cut.

After the operation a substance like *'iṭr* (perfume) called by a name not Arabic,

[45] W. Thesiger, Arabian Sands, (London, 1959), p. 89 seq.

[46] Ḥaḍramoût, op. cit., p. 491 seq.

[47] Ustāḏḥ al-Mar'ah, p. 126.

[48] Snouck Hurgronje, Mekka, trans. J. H. Monahan (Leiden, 1931), p. 113, "The not yet Mekkanised Ḥaḍramīs are accustomed to circumcise their children already on the 40th day."

[49] I. E. Snell, Brief Notes on . . . Tribes of the East Aden Protectorate (mimeographed) (al-Mukallā, 1st Oct., 1952) p. 7.

mayakafutay, is put on the cut to stop the flow of blood. The flies are kept off it. The boy returns to his mother. They say, »*Ṭahharnā-h,* We have purefied him.« Men and women now come to give the boy something as a present, and on the next day an entertainment is given.

It is to be remarked that the phrase »*kulli makẖtūn,* every circumcised one«, is used in the Quarters of Tarīm in their documents to signify every adult male.

In Aden, despite the view of al-Baiḥānī it seems that boys are generally circumcised at 6,7, or even at the age of 10. The circumcision used to be carried out by the *ḥallāq* or barber, but I am told that it is usually performed nowadays by the Ḥumrān family from Ibb of the Yemen. On these occasions the children of the street eat honey with the fingers (*yilḥas al-ʿasal*) from the little cups without handles used in South Arabia. In Aden special songs are sung at circumcisions. When a child is circumcised in his first year the mid-wife will stand with him in her arms und small children will run in a circle round her, and they will sing the following words

Midwife: *Igrū warā-nā.* Children: *Yā ʿayāl.*
Run after me. O children.

Gāhil maʿā-nā. *Yā ʿayāl.*
I have a boy. O children.

Gāhil agā-nā. *Yā ʿayāl.*
A boy has come to me. O children.

Children: *Yā giddah qawlī qabaʿ qabaʿ.*
O midwife. say *qabaʿ qabaʿ.* (sense unknown)

Yā giddah rās-ik ṣa 'l-ṭabaq.
O midwife your head is like a tray (i. e. big)

Midwife: *Igrū warā-nā.* Children: *Yā ʿayāl.*

Bi - ʿl-kẖawzarānah. *Yā ʿayāl.*
With the bamboo. O children.

Gāhil maʿā-nā. *Yā ʿayāl.*

Etc.

Female Circumcision

To quote al-Baiḥānī[50] once more, »Scholars have held differing opinions concerning circumcision for a woman, but with the Shāfiʿīs it is obligatory — the least of it is the cutting of a bit of the skin growing at the top of the vulva (*farj*).« He alludes also to the references in books of *fiqh* concerning women's actions in piercing (*takẖrīm*) the ears and nose to suspend ornaments from them, »which is an ancient custom and still continues in many countries.« As will be seen these two operations are carried out at the same time. Notwithstanding al-Baiḥānī's clear dictum however, I am informed that girls in Aden are no longer circumcised, though admittedly my informant was an educated young man, but the midwife (*muwallidah*) used to

[50] Ustādh al-Mar'ah, p. 80.

do this. In reply to a question from al-Tawwāhī, the Aden paper *al-Nahḍah* (1952), CXVI, says circumcision of girls is not obligatory, adding that it lessens desire in women, and pointing to the known objections to it, especially as practised in the Sudan.

In Tarīm girls are circumcised by a woman about the second day after birth, usually by a woman who knows this art, and not by any particular family. The woman is generally a slave-woman (*amah*) who knows how to brand for illnesses, or to massage a child's neck[51] (*raqqab, tarqīb*) after a fall or on account of some other sickness.[52] »She also pierces her ears for her and keeps the hole (open) with a thread impregnated with indigo (*takḫṣḫuf lahā wa-timsak al-ḳḫudrah bi-ḳḫaiṭ nīl*)«, three holes in each ear for suspending ornaments (*li-ta'lūq al-ḥilī*), ornaments for the ear being called *qurṭ* or *miṭḫqāl*. The *ḳḫaṣḫṣḫāfah* woman comes and operates both on the ears and clitoris of the girl, but how the circumcision was performed was quite unknown to Raḥaiyam who, of course, had never actually seen it done. An expression he remarked, is »*Uḳḫṣḫif iḍḫnī lak*, I pierce my ear for you«, but it simply means, »I thank you.« Landberg[53] however gives a description of the operation which, though in itself not absolutely clear (in the Arabic), I have taken in conjunction with the handbook on Ḥisbah of Ibn al-Ukḫuwwah[54], himself a Ṣḫāfi'ī writer, but an Egyptian. The latter quoting a Tradition of the Prophet says that the tip of the piece of skin (i. e. the clitoris) should be taken, but it should not be »extirpated«. Landberg places the circumcision of a girl eight days after the birth.

Describing the tribes of the Ẓufār region, Bertram Thomas[55] concurs that a girl is circumcised without ceremony on the day of her birth, but he avers that the tribes here, probably he means the Qarā, practice clitoridectomy- while the tribes of Oman merely incise the top of the clitoris. If Thomas is correct, and these things are not easy to ascertain, even for a woman doctor, then, on balance, it would seem that the non-Arabic speaking group differs from the Arabic speakers to the east and west of them, but this is a point that requires investigation.

The Hermaphrodite

In Aden the Arabic word is *ḳḫurunṭḫā*, which Landberg considers the usual word in Southern Arabia. I saw a man in 'Awḏḫalī country, probably a hermaphrodite who was allowed to mix freely with women. Muslim legists discuss the question of the circumcision of the hermaphrodite at some length, as much, I suspect, because it is a fascinating topic as because of its importance in law.

[51] Massage is a common remedy for a large range of afflictions in Southern Arabia.

[52] My notes mention also *al-rafī'*, which is *"ḥijāmah bidūn faṣḫṭ*, blood-letting without making a slit", but unfortunately I do not seem to have recorded whether this is a remedy for the child's neck or, more likely, an art practiced by these women.

[53] Ḥadramoût, op. cit., p. 490.

[54] The Ma'ālim al-Qurba . . . of . . . Ibn al-Ukhuwwa, edit. R. Levy (Cambridge-London, 1938), p. 164 (Ar. text).

[55] Op. cit., p. 71.

Appendix

The following account is translated from a passage in the voluminous notes of Shaikh Raḥaiyam Bā Faḍl. He prefaces this passage by the statement that Tarīm has statutes and customs (*qawā'id wa-'awā'id*) in accordance with the *sharī'ah* and *sunnah* of the Prophet.

»Concerning what pertains to the affairs of a boy from the time of his delivery (*waḍ'*), i. e. his coming forth from his mother's belly, until the time of his circumcision, i. e. his purefication (*taṭhīr*). It is the practice of the people of Tarīm, when a woman bears a male or female child, for the men present of his relations, to say the *aḍhān* (call to prayer) in the ear of the boy or the girl who is brought into being, saying the *aḍhān* in the right ear, and the prayer (*yuqīm al-ṣalāh*) in his left ear. They rub (*ḥannak*) some dates[56] or sugar on his lips, and make him sniff civet (*yurawwiḥūn-uh al-zubād*) or other sweet-smelling perfumes, and they recite the Sūrat al-Qadr three times over the boy, for it preserves him from committing immoral deeds (*fawāḥish*). Likewise they recite over him the two Sūrahs al-Mu'awwidhatān (i.e. the last two chapters of the Koran) because of the preservation (from harm) and guardianship (against the Jinn or the *ḥāsid*, envious person) they contain. When they sever the umbilical cord, *ṣurr* or *surr*, they turn the newly-born child (*yankusūn al-hādif*) upside down on his face, so as the remaining blood in it can come out, for this is a safeguard (*amān*) against colic (*qāliṣ*[57]) and stomachache (*maghṣ*), and they blow (*yan-faḳhūn*) in his mouth[58]. The people of former times used to take a *maḥqab*[59] of coffee, when a male child was born to them, to one of the Koran-schools (*al-'ilam*[60]) known for the teaching of the Koran and give the teacher the good tidings of the newly-born boy, and he would perform a *Fātiḥah* and pray for the well-being (*salāmah*) of the newly born boy, along with pious blessings, and give the children leave to go immediately after their reciting the *Fātiḥah* aloud. After the delivery (*al-waḍ'*) they sent small children at once to inform their relatives, acquaintances, friends or neighbours (*lahum jīrah*), and when a number of women have collected they ululate (*yaḥjuran*), i. e. they trill trills of joy (*yaṣluqan ṣalīq faraḥ*) to give notice of the health and well-being of mother and child. It is their custom to present money to the woman who has given birth, each person in accordance with his means (*wa-min 'ādāt-hum yubaṣḥṣḥirūn bi-darāhim li'l-waḍi'ah, kull-in 'alā qadr ḥāl-uh*). In return for this (*fī muqābil hādhā*) the family of the newborn child gives an entertainment for the near relations, especially of the wife's people, everybody in accordance with his circumstances.

Now, concerning the naming day (*yawm al-tasmiyah*), i. e. the 7th day after the birth they carry out the custom (*sunnah*) of the *'aqīqah*[61] laid down in the law (*fiqh*) books but they differ as to how it is done and when. Some there are who distribute meat (*yuqassim laḥamāt*[62]), some who give a feast (*walīmah*), and some who do both; there are some who

[56] They put a little on his lips (*yufaṭṭirūn-ah*) or put it on his nose. In Tarīm we saw babies only a few days old given dates in a piece of cloth to suck.

[57] *Qalṣah*, i. e. „*al-waja' fi 'l-baṭn qāliṣ*, pain in the stomach is (called) *qāliṣ*. This is no doubt the same word as *jalsah* with is part of the nickname of Fughmah, cf. Hūd and other Pre-Islamic Prophets, op. cit. p. 148.

[58] This is so that "*yakūn ṣaiyit*, he may have a loud voice". Usually a woman blows into the child's mouth. If a man has a low voice they say to him, „*Man ḍhī nafḳhat lak*, Who blew into your mouth for you?"

[59] The *maḥqab* which contains sugar and *jifl* (coffe-bean) is made of palm-leaf (*ḥaṣīr*), and is cone-shaped with a leather thong at the top, but it is not used nowadays.

[60] Sing. *'ilmah*.

[61] Raḥaiyam said two sheep for a boy and one for a girl, which of course is orthodox – if it is actually practice and not mere theory. I do not think many *ḍa'īfs* could afford so much.

[62] I. e. raw meat. Presents of meat are not uncommon. Saiyid Muḥammad b. Hāshim informed me that he was entitled to a present of meat from a certain mosque *waqf*. I recall also seeing the soldiers of the Emir of Sokoto in N. Nigeria taking a daily gift of meat from the palace to people in the town.

make a big thing of it, some who are perfunctory, and some who are altogether unable (to do anything) through inability or poverty. If it is a feast (*walīmah*), when those invited are met together they recite the Mawlid of the Prophet Muḥammad, God bless and honour him, and chose three names for the new-born child, burying them in earth (*ṭīn*) which they place in front of the mother, and they stand by whatever name she chances upon[63].

When the boy's hair gets long (*iḏā ṭāl rās al-ṣabī*) they »Wednesday« him, (*yurabbi'ūn lah*), i. e. they clip the hair of his head on a Wednesday, each shaving (*ḥilāqah*) (sic)[64]. People in former times used to give the barber (*ḥallāq*) a measure of grain (*muṣrā ṭa'ām*) by way of fee for each shaving. They bring up (*yirabbūn*) the boy the best way (possible) until he reaches seven or eight years old, or even more, and if they have already circumcised him during the days following childbirth (*aiyām al-nufsah*), good and well (*yā ḥabbaḏā*), but if not, then that will come at its appropriate place.«

[63] An *'ālim*, scholar, *walī*, saint, or grandfather, *jadd*, choses the names, and they put them to the mother – or this is done when the people in the house disagree.

[64] There are *arba'īn ḥilāqah*, forty shavings, performed each Wednesday until 40 have been completed, after which the shaving may take place any day. For each shaving a line (*ḵẖuṭṭ*) is drawn on the wall. This seems to differ from the Daṯînah custom described by Landberg, Études . . . Daṯînah, op. cit., p. 1778, who mentions the ḏabīḥat al-kandarah, sacrifice when they shave the hair – which is carried out 40 or less days after the birth, to do away with the "hair of the womb".

Addenda

P.200 Professor Yasir Sulayman writes: In Palestine the word *skhām* is used to refer to black substance sticking to kitchen utensils. In a ritual women conduct to ward off the evil eye, *skhām* is put on the child's forehead after reciting a set charm. The *skhām* comes from the ashes of a small piece of black cloth.

P.205/26 The *khawzāranah* is the fez-shaped bamboo cap of the Yemen, very pliable and expensive.